



# SILK & CEDARS

## A scramble in the LEBANONS

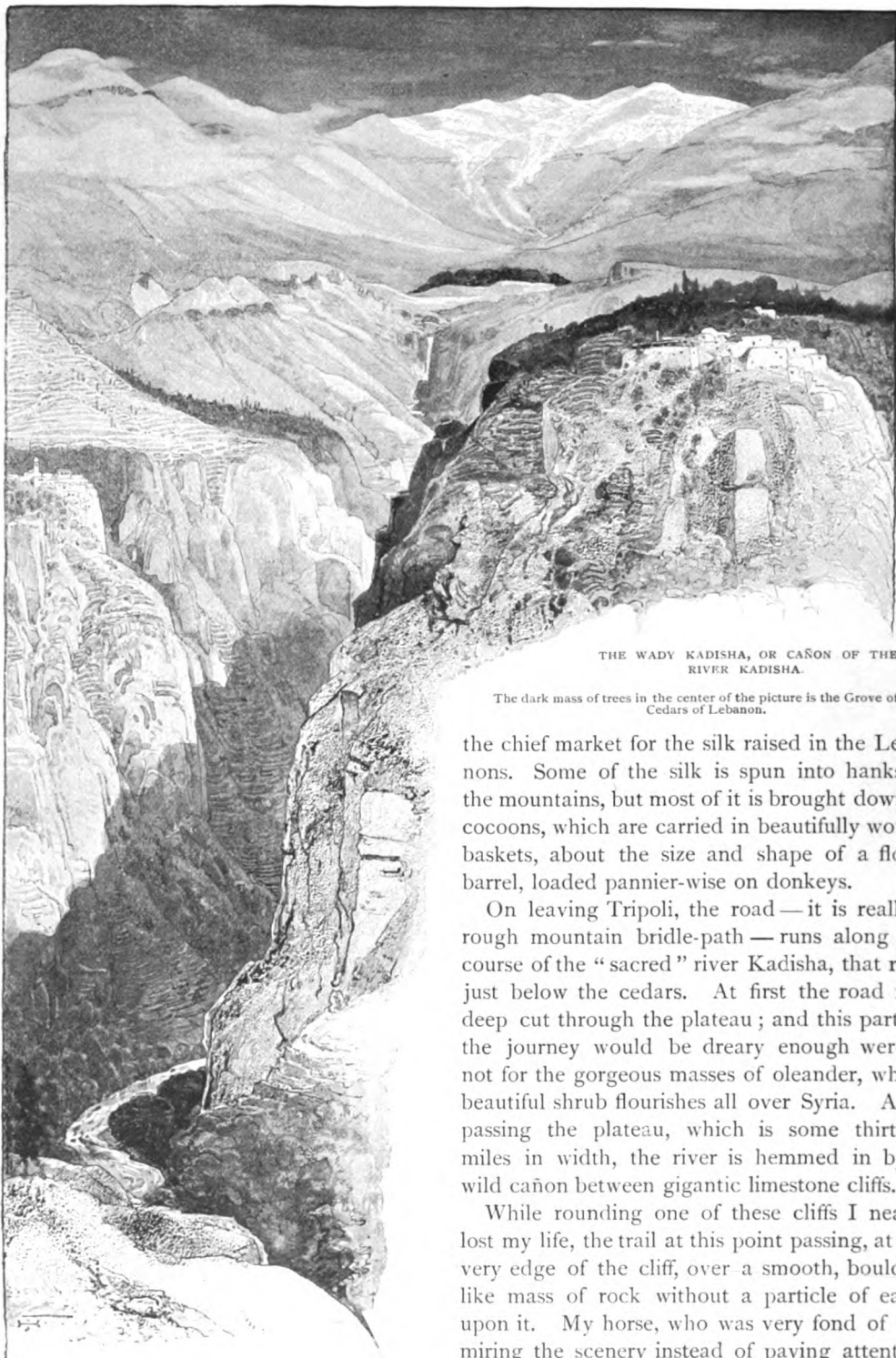
By Harry Fenn.

**W**HEN I was a boy it used to be a fad among the young folks to raise silkworms, and in the town in which I was born nearly every boy in the parish kept them, much to the annoyance of the women-folk of the household, I fear. They found caterpillars in their drawing-rooms, and caterpillars weaving their cocoons in every place where they should not be. I suppose the caterpillars and the boys were nuisances; but it was great fun for the boys.

Years later, when I was journeying in the mountains of Lebanon, making sketches for a book called "Picturesque Palestine," almost the first thing that attracted my attention was my old friend the silkworm. In fact, he was in evidence long before we landed from the steamer; for far away on the mountain-side those step-like lines climbing almost to the eternal snows are the silkworms' pastures — terraces of mulberry plants.

But why, you will ask, "Silk and Cedars"? The only satisfactory reply I can give you is that after all these years, when the weary marches and dangerous passes of those mountains are forgotten, the silk-culture and the cedars of Lebanon are the two pictures still fresh in the memory.

I will try to tell you about it. To begin at the beginning, we must go back to the quaint old city of Tripoli, situated in the northwest corner of Syria, where the foothills of the Lebanons come tumbling down into the sea. Though its palmy days are over, its great age should command our respect; for Tripoli was founded seven hundred years before the time of Christ. The history of the city we will not go into. Its chief industry seems always to have been connected with the silkworm. As far back as 1289 A. D. there were four thousand looms kept busy; and Tripoli is still



THE WADY KADISHA, OR CAÑON OF THE RIVER KADISHA.

The dark mass of trees in the center of the picture is the Grove of the Cedars of Lebanon.

the chief market for the silk raised in the Lebanon. Some of the silk is spun into hanks in the mountains, but most of it is brought down in cocoons, which are carried in beautifully woven baskets, about the size and shape of a flour-barrel, loaded pannier-wise on donkeys.

On leaving Tripoli, the road — it is really a rough mountain bridle-path — runs along the course of the “sacred” river Kadisha, that rises just below the cedars. At first the road is a deep cut through the plateau; and this part of the journey would be dreary enough were it not for the gorgeous masses of oleander, which beautiful shrub flourishes all over Syria. After passing the plateau, which is some thirteen miles in width, the river is hemmed in by a wild cañon between gigantic limestone cliffs.

While rounding one of these cliffs I nearly lost my life, the trail at this point passing, at the very edge of the cliff, over a smooth, boulder-like mass of rock without a particle of earth upon it. My horse, who was very fond of admiring the scenery instead of paying attention to his business, slipped just at this bad point,

partly owing to the idiotic horseshoes used in that country, which are simply flat plates of iron put on cold. One, if not both, of his hind legs went over the edge, and there was nothing more substantial than air for a thousand feet below. However, the wiry little beast scrambled cat-like up on the shelving ledge again; but it was a narrow escape.

We are now approaching the region of the silk-culture; and those step-like lines which we saw from the ship's deck turn out to be little hanging gardens. Wherever a handful of earth

get ready to spin their cocoons; but a second crop comes on later, and a curious use is made of that. The tree-owner purchases one of those queer, big-tailed Syrian sheep, the tail of which weighs twenty pounds when at the full maturity of its fatness; and then a strange stuffing process begins, not unlike the fattening of the Strasburg geese. When the sheep can eat no more, the women of the house feed it; and it is no uncommon sight to see a woman going out to make an afternoon call, leading her sheep by a string, and carrying a basket of mulberry



THE GROVE OF CEDARS OF LEBANON.

can be made to rest upon a ledge, there a mulberry plant grows. It is a picturesque and thrilling sight to see a boy lowered by a rope over the precipice, carrying a big basket of earth and cuttings of mulberry twigs to plant in his hanging garden. The crop of leaves, fodder for the worms, is gathered in the same way. By such patient and dangerous industry have these hardy mountaineers been able to make their wilderness of rock blossom into brightly-colored silks. Not a single leaf is left on the trees by the time the voracious worms

leaves on her arm. Having arrived at her friend's house, she squats on the ground, rolls a ball of mulberry leaves in her right hand, and slips it into the sheep's mouth, then works the sheep's jaw up and down with the other hand till she thinks the mouthful has been chewed enough, when she thrusts it down the throat of the unfortunate animal. The funny part of the business is that probably half a dozen gossips of the village are seated around the yard, all engaged at the same operation. Of course the sheep get immensely fat, and that is

the object; for at the killing-time the fat is tried out and put into jars, as meat for the winter.

As the time approaches for the silkworm to hatch out of the egg, the family move out of the house, and camp under the trees, giving up the entire establishment to the worms, after having placed the eggs on shelves made of a reed like bamboo. At first the young worms are fed on finely chopped leaves; but as they grow larger the leaves need only be broken in two. The people have to feed and watch the worms night and day, or they wander in search of food and be lost; and in the silence of the night the sound of the worms feeding is like a gently falling rain.

The worms fast three or four times during this period, and about twenty-four hours is the length of each fast. A curious feature about their fast is their posture; they assume the attitude of a cobra snake about to strike, and remain rigidly fixed in that position for the entire period. When they are ready to spin, small branches are placed on the shelves, and as the cocoons are formed upon them the dead twigs seem to bear golden fruit. When the worms get through that part of the business the neighbors are called in—something as to an old-fashioned New England apple-paring bee. They call it “qtâf” in Arabic—that is “picking”; and soon you see piles of pale-green, pure-white, and golden-yellow cocoons heaped upon the floor. Later they may be spun into hanks; but usually the cocoons are sent down the mountains to Tripoli or Damascus, and after their thirty or forty days of toil, they too often have to sell the produce for next to nothing, as the Chinese are always ready to undersell them.

Another curious use Mr. Silkworm is put to is to soak him in vinegar for some hours, after which he is drawn out into so-called “catgut” to make snells or leaders for fish-hooks.

Although from our camping-ground in this village of silk-spinners the grove of cedars looked as if it were within an hour's ride, there was a long, weary day's journey before we reached them. Every girl and boy of the Christian world has heard and read, over and over again, of the “Cedars of Lebanon”; but very few have any idea of the locality and surroundings of the famous grove. It is a popu-

lar error, by the way, to suppose that there are no other cedars remaining besides this group at the head of the “Wady” (valley or cañon) Kadisha. There are, to my knowledge, ten other groves, some numbering thousands of trees. This particular group that we are about to visit is called by the Arabs by a name which means, “Cedars of the Lord.” They number about four hundred trees, among them a circle of gigantic fellows that are called by the natives “The Twelve Apostles,” upon the strength of an old tradition that Jesus and his disciples having come to this spot and left their staves standing in the ground, these staves sprouted into cedar-trees.

There is every reason to suppose that in the time of King Solomon these scattered groves were part of an enormous unbroken forest, extending the entire length of the Lebanon range of mountains, about one hundred miles, running nearly parallel with the Mediterranean shore from a little below Beirut. The summits of the range are from fifteen to twenty miles from the coast.

The Lebanon—that is, the “White”—does not derive its name from glittering snow-peaks, but from the white limestone cliffs of its summits. The first historical mention of the trees is in the Bible (2 Sam. v. 11): “And Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David, and cedar trees, and carpenters, and masons: and they built David an house.”

From that day to this the people have been almost as reckless and wasteful of these noble giants of the mountains as our own people are of these cedars' first cousins, the redwood trees of the California coast-range. As we approach the grove, which stands upon the top of a small hill, the foliage is almost black against the snow-covered crags of Dahr-el-Kadib, which rears its highest peak over ten thousand feet above the sea.

There is a Maronite chapel in the grove, its patriarch claiming the sole right to the sacred trees; and, luckily, the superstition with which the trees have been surrounded has been their salvation. All the cedars of Lebanon would have been demolished for firewood years ago were not the people threatened with dire calamity should they take a single stick.

From the few noble trees that remain struggling for existence in these snow-clad mountains, it is very hard to picture the great unbroken forest David and Solomon knew. But even this small grove, remaining hidden away in their barren mountain-tops, figures prominently in history, poetry, art, and romance. There is probably not in the world another group of trees that has the same rare interest.

The cones of the Lebanon cedar are unlike anything I know in this country. They are

about the size and form of a well-grown Spitzberg apple, and almost as smooth. The full-grown one that I have drawn on page 467 is as smooth and hard as it was the day I gathered it, fifteen years ago.

Those wonderfully beautiful trees will bear transplanting into any mild climate. Indeed, I have seen much finer specimens in England than in Syria. There is one in Richmond Park, the great branches of which cover the better part of a half-acre of ground.

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## ON THE FERRY.

BY M. L. VAN VORST.

MOONLIGHT, starlight —

How many lights there be!

Little swinging lanterns

On the ships at sea.

Green lights, yellow lights,

Crimson lights aglow —

I see them shine on winter nights

In mist and snow.

Big boats, little boats —

How many boats there be!

Little swinging life-boats

On the ships at sea.

I go on the ferry-boat,

Mother goes with me;

I wish some day that we would float

Far out to sea!

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## MASTER SKYLARK.

BY JOHN BENNETT.

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### CHAPTER XVII.

#### CAREW'S OFFER.

NEXT morning Carew donned his plum-colored cloak, and with Nick's hand held tightly in his own went out of the door and down the steps into a drifting fog which filled the street, the bandy-legged man with the ribbon in his ear following close upon their heels.

People passed them like shadows in the mist, and all the houses were a blur until they came into a wide, open place where the wind blew free above a wall with many great gates.

In the middle of this open place a huge gray building stood, staring out over the housetops —

a great cathedral, wonderful and old. Its walls were dark with time and smoke and damp, and the lofty tower that rose above it was in part but a hollow shell split by lightning and blackened by fire. But crowded between its massive buttresses were booths and chapmen's stalls; against its hoary side a small church leaned like a child against a mother's breast; and in and around about it eddied a throng of men like ants upon a busy hill.

All around the outer square were shops with gilded fronts and most amazing signs: golden angels with outstretched wings, tiger heads, bears, brazen serpents, and silver cranes; and in and out of the shop-doors darted apprentices with new-bound books and fresh-printed slips; for this was old St. Paul's, the meeting-place of